



# **City Son: Andrew W. Cooper's Impact on Modern-Day Brooklyn (Margaret Walker Alexander Series in African American Studies)**

*Wayne Dawkins*

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In 1966, a year after the Voting Rights Act began liberating millions of southern blacks, New Yorkers challenged a political system that weakened their voting power. Andrew W. Cooper (1927-2002), a beer company employee, sued state officials in a case called *Cooper vs. Power*. In 1968, the courts agreed that black citizens were denied the right to elect an authentic representative of their community. The 12th Congressional District was redrawn. Shirley Chisholm, a member of Cooper's political club, ran for the new seat and made history as the first black woman elected to Congress.

Cooper became a journalist, a political columnist, then founder of Trans Urban News Service and the *City Sun*, a feisty Brooklyn-based weekly that published from 1984 to 1996. Whether the stories were about Mayor Koch or Rev. Al Sharpton, Howard Beach or Crown Heights, Tawana Brawley's dubious rape allegations, the *Daily News* Four trial, or Spike Lee's filmmaking career, Cooper's *City Sun* commanded attention and moved officials and readers to action.

Cooper's leadership also gave Brooklyn--particularly predominantly black central Brooklyn--an identity. It is no accident that in the twenty-first century the borough crackles with energy. Cooper fought tirelessly for the community's vitality when it was virtually abandoned by the civic and business establishments in the mid-to-late twentieth century. In addition, scores of journalists trained by Cooper are keeping his spirit alive.

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